

REFORMS OR SOCIALISM?

A Criticism of the Election Address

"S.P.G.B. propaganda is excellent in letting people know what Socialism IS NOT but it is amazingly silent in stating what IT IS."

The Election Address sent out by the Party to some 26,000 households in North Paddington bears out the validity of this kind of criticism. It commenced with the salutation "Fellow Workers," which must mean that the author wrote as a wage-worker when in fact he should be writing as a Socialist.

The opening is negative:—

"I make you no promises."

"I am not begging for your vote."

"My Party does not aim to govern you."

The statement continues to be negative to the end.

Owing to the absence of a positive statement in general terms of what Socialism means, the Election Address could only appeal to workers within the relationship of poverty and riches, i.e., by implication the reader was invited to think that we stood for higher wages, cheaper cost of living, shorter working hours, more and better houses.

The only references to what we suggested people should do were expressed in abstract terms, e.g.:—

1. "There is no solution to be found by tinkering with the effects, this form of society must be dug up by the roots."
2. "Only a complete change in the basis of society can produce a lasting improvement in the lot of the working class."
3. "It is about time we stood on our feet and made some drastic changes in a world that could satisfy our needs with plenty but provides us with plenty of needs."
4. "The fear of unemployment will be with us as long as we remain wage-workers."

5. "This ownership must be ended, these things must be converted to the common property of everyone and democratically controlled in the interests of all."
6. "When a Socialist working class decides to reconstruct society in keeping with its own interests by dispossessing the Capitalist class, it must first take into its hands the machinery of government."

What does all this mean? Is this the best the E.C. could turn out for distribution to tens of thousands of people?

1. The first quotation does not mean anything. It is just wind.

YOUR IDEAL 1954 E.C. MEMBER



LONG HAIR ONE SIDE: Intellectual, yet hard-headed realist.
SINGLE EYE on Party line.
EAR TO THE GROUND to hear Branch rumblings.
INTERNAL TEA SUPPLY: no distracting cups, etc.

2. This is incorrect—a complete change in the basis of society, i.e. from a property basis to everything being held in common, will produce the end of the working class, not "a lasting improvement in the lot of the working class."
3. This can only mean, to a reader who has no knowledge of a socialist alternative to wage-labour, that he or she should become rich.
4. Again, the reader, not being supplied with the socialist alternative, will agree that the wage-worker is in constant fear of unemployment but the capitalist is not; therefore the reader of our election address should strive to become an employer and by doing so escape the fear of unemployment.
5. This is merely a restatement of the object, it is not an explanation.
6. This would seem to be advocating the dictatorship of the proletariat. Seeing that already the election address has told the reader "My Party does not aim to govern you," it would seem reasonable to infer that the working class will be the government—this will appear ludicrous because you can't have a government comprising millions of people.

The election address sets out a fairly detailed criticism of the promises and schemes of the Tory and Labour parties on the grounds that these promises and schemes have either been forgotten or that the cures have not materialised. This kind of criticism, when not accompanied by a description of the Socialist alternative, can only mean that if the reader votes for the Socialist candidate the S.P.G.B. will provide better houses, shorter hours, cheaper living costs, etc.

This is Reformism by implication.
Then there is that part of the Election

Address headed "OUR COMMON CAUSE":—

"We are all members of a class that needs to find an employer in order to live. Our problems are identical. We have a common cause."

This shows that the writer of the Election Address was approaching people from the standpoint of the way in which he gets his living, i.e. a wage-worker, when he should be writing as a Socialist to non-Socialists. A wage-worker and a Socialist are not one and the same thing. Wage-working is an economic function: Socialists are people with socialist ideas. The problems of wage-workers and Socialists are not identical because they have different objectives. They have not got a common cause.

Throughout the Election Address there is no clue as to the nature of Socialism—even in the negative sense. The usual statements that any speaker would put forward, such as:

To each according to his needs, etc.;

The world-wide character of Socialism;
That no classes would exist;

That money would not be necessary, nor armies, navies, etc.

—are not mentioned. Unless the reader has some knowledge of such points as these, the material contained in the Election Address will be construed to mean that whereas the other parties have failed in housing, reforms, etc., the S.P.G.B. will succeed. This kind of propaganda does not make socialists because it is not propaganda about Socialism. I earnestly request members to read the Election Address in the light of the above criticism, for I am sure that members cannot be satisfied with this kind of propaganda.

This is not criticism directed against Waters but against the Executive Committee and the general propaganda of the Party. I do hope that branches will take this matter up with the E.C. There are many members who would welcome the opportunity of de-

bating their ideas with the ideas of those members who think that discussion within the party is largely a waste of time and energy, and all that is necessary regarding Socialism has already been written and nothing more need be done except to go on reiterating the object and eight principles.

To those who think that Socialism was defined in 1904 and that is that, it must be pointed out that definitions grow as the horizon of experience expands. Definitions are not inventions but descriptions of the question. Socialism or Social Equality could only be roughly defined in the 19th century; a little clearer in 1904. Today there are some who see clearly that the best arguments in favour of Socialism apply with equal force to all human beings.

The first "Law" of socialist action is to know what you really want and the second—a close corollary—to see that you are not misled into accepting a spurious substitute.

A. W. L. TURNER.

CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondents are requested to keep their letters as brief and to the point as possible.

To the Editors.

Dear Comrades,

K. R. Smith, in his letter (Nov. issue), betrays an appalling ignorance of the Party machinery and the way in which it is used. Like a number of other critics, he takes up a rather detached position which would appear to remove him from any responsibility for these "ghastly horrors" which are inflicted on the unsuspecting membership by the "authoritarian" Executive Committee, against whom his main complaints appear to be.

Comrade or Mr. Smith may not realise that the two instances of what he terms "authoritarian thinking," i.e. permission to publish individual written matter and the speaker's test, are both issues upon which Party Conferences have instructed the E.C. Take the case of Literature. It will probably be clear to most members that any propaganda, whether written or spoken, must aim at putting the *Party's view*, and members must certainly not oppose our views in public or in published literature. It is the duty of any E.C. to ensure that only the Party Case shall be published—that is, the case which is accepted by a democratic majority as being in line with our established Principles and is not in conflict with them. The question of censorship does not arise, as in no other organisation are there the facilities

for free discussion and criticism as exist in the S.P.G.B. The Party Principles can be changed or modified to accord with the wishes of the majority of the membership. This is not a piece of gratuitous advice to Comrade Smith. It is the only way new attitudes and ideas can be arrived at; free discussion and majority rule.

The speaker's test, which is one of his principal criticisms, is a misnomer, and was introduced during war time for a purpose entirely different from that of today. It does not prevent members from speaking, and only applies to the outdoor platform. Any member of the Party may get on a Party platform out-of-doors and speak provided there are some experienced comrades in the audience, or a speaker who has passed the test. It is also possible for Party members to speak or address any indoor meeting, large or small, without the necessity of undergoing the speaker's test. Comrade Smith ought to know this, as he was addressing public meetings before he passed the speaker's test.

His statement that E.C. permission is required in order to chalk walls and stick up posters is sheer rubbish, as also is the statement about E.C. bureaucracy. The E.C. has to take its instructions from Branches and membership, who would not tolerate bureaucratic handling of their affairs. On the question of the "S.S.," Comrade Smith is hopelessly ill-informed. The Editorial Com-

mittee are not the sole arbiters of what should or should not be published. They are a sub-committee of the Executive and have not hesitated in the past to apply for E.C. guidance on certain articles received for publication.

The useful suggestion made by Smith about organising a bureau of people has never been submitted by him or any other comrade. Let Comrade Smith organise such a bureau; there is nothing to prevent him. The Overseas Secretary has for years been trying to get individuals who can speak foreign languages to assist him. As he has not had a great deal of success maybe Comrade Smith can help him.

When Comrade Smith talks about Organisations abroad who could be of assistance to us, why does he not name them? This is typical of the vague and sweeping nature of Smith's entire criticisms. No evidence is advanced to support the numerous allegations he has made concerning the "bloody-minded attitude of members," and the various methods of improving propaganda which he claims have been discouraged—no details are given.

Comrade Smith has certainly got it off his chest, but why in "Forum"?

Yours fraternally,

J. D'ARCY,
Central Organiser.

Dear Comrades,

S.R.P. asked (Sept. FORUM): "What is the Party's attitude to the use of violence in connection with the establishment of Socialism?" and he instanced a minority attempting to throw a spanner into the works.

I outlined (Nov. FORUM) what I think should be the Party's attitude to any violent obstruction and, in doing this, had to outline the initial steps necessary to establish Socialism. These initial steps can only be made out of such conditions as will then exist, even the armed forces if necessary.

He now replies at great length just to say that "Socialism is nothing like Capitalism." No one has said that Socialism would be like Capitalism. In fact, no one has said that Socialism would be like the establishment of Socialism. My article on Violence is nothing more, and nothing less, than an answer to his question—What is the Party's attitude to the use of violence in the establishment of Socialism?

Yours fraternally,
E. CARNELL.

To the Editors.
Comrades,

In reply to "Roger" in the December FORUM, if he is really such an expert on publicity his place is on the Publicity Committee of the Party, where he will have ample opportunity to show his ability in that direction.

The recent by-election in North Paddington should show us clearly how much publicity we are likely to get from the capitalist press. While the *Daily Mail* ridiculed our efforts, the *Daily Express* and *Daily Telegraph* gave us a very good write-up of the Metropolitan Theatre meeting, but that was only confined to London, and no mention was made in the *Express* circulating further afield—and this, I expect, applies also to the *Telegraph*. Throughout the campaign we were not mentioned once in the *News Chronicle*, and in announcing the result it only mentioned us as the S.P.G.B., which to most people would be meaningless.

I disagree entirely with his idea of selling the premises to obtain the necessary cash for a publicity campaign. It behoves the members to do their utmost to increase the sales of the *Socialist Standard*, so that as soon as

BOUND COPIES

We regret the delay in supplying bound copies of the first 15 issues to those who have ordered them

Orders are being dealt with in rotation. Priority will be given to Branches and Companion Parties who write for a copy this month.

possible it can be published weekly. To get the necessary cash we should copy the capitalists and ask readers to take up shares—not with a view to making a profit (and that is where we differ from the capitalists) but with the object of ensuring that its weekly publication shall be a success. I, for one, would be prepared to help.

Fraternally yours,

WALLEY.

(Editorial note: Comrade Walley's attention is drawn to the press reports of the by-election in the current issue of the S.S. It is true that the *Daily Mail* ridiculed our efforts, but it also stated some facts about us. The *News Chronicle* mentioned us by our correct title on 23rd Nov., 30th Nov. and 4th Dec. In the latter, five lines above the "Lab.," "Con." and "S.P.G.B." votes, appeared the words "Socialist Party of Great Britain." At least one edition of the *Daily Express* circulating in Glasgow carried a report of the "Met." meeting.)

To the Editors.

Dear Comrades,

Comrade Roger considers that the Party should carry out a large scale publicity campaign on modern lines. A modern publicity campaign costs thousands of pounds. Is this what Comrade Roger has in mind? The terms publicity and propaganda are often used interchangeably, but I would define publicity as getting the Party known, either by advertising or other methods, with the object of getting people interested to the extent that they are willing to hear or read our propaganda. Taking part in Parliamentary elections (particularly by-elections) is one such means, and as a result of the recent by-election, with the Party's name mentioned on the radio and in local and all national newspapers, thousands of people must have heard of the Party who had never heard of it before. One result of this is that it increases

the prestige of the Party platform at outdoor as well as indoor meetings so that people are more likely to come to meetings or to stop and listen.

The writer joined the Publicity Committee when the only income was sixpences collected from members at 42 Great Dover Street. Since then, annual allocations of £50 or more have been made for Press advertising, and during my time every financially possible means has been used towards getting the Party known, but publicity, like everything else, has to be attuned to the Party's finance. Advertisements have appeared in "left wing" papers, and in the old days in the national Press (this is more difficult now), the B.B.C. were approached from time to time, Branches were encouraged to get reports of their meetings in the local press and to offer lectures to local T.U. branches, for which printed letters were and are available at H.Q. Every public library in the U.K. was written to and offered a specially bound volume of pamphlets; several accepted, including many overseas. A leaflet with the principles and a brief statement of the Party's attitude was prepared in Esperanto; it was advertised in several Esperanto papers and copies were sent to the editors of all Esperanto journals (about sixty) throughout the world.

Adverts. of meetings are another form of publicity. Even if people do not attend the meeting, they see the advert. which thus helps to get the party better known.

It seems to me that no advertising will bring spectacular results unless a spirit of receptivity already exists, and it seems to me that such a spirit does not generally exist at the present time. Obviously this will change with changing economic conditions and a greater realisation on the part of workers generally of the conditions which govern their lives.

Yours fraternally,
R. MILBORNE.

DON'T MISS—

THE DENISON HOUSE MEETINGS
(296 Vauxhall Bridge Road, Victoria)
— "50 YEARS OF SOCIALISM" —

Next meeting: SUNDAY, FEB. 7th, 7 p.m.
"Socialist theory in the light of modern developments"
Speakers: W. READ, E. WILMOTT

THE HEAD OFFICE FORUMS

Every Saturday at 7.30 p.m. Current subject:

— "THE D. of P. AND ITS IMPLICATIONS" —
Panel: W. READ, A. TURNER, E. WILMOTT, C. WILSON

SOCIALISM AND VIOLENCE

A Third View

I think that there is a lot more to be said on the subject of violence, not only in regard to the use of weapons against adversaries, but to the use of coercion, or compulsion, by any method suggestive of the *dominance* of one human being by another, whichever form it may take. But first I must comment on the actual meaning of the statements by McClatchie and Lake (Dec. FORUM) with some regret that a third opinion was not included.

In particular, I am concerned with the reference to the use of the political machinery, including the armed forces, once the property system of society has been made illegal. Lake states that "if the class struggle means anything at all, it means that there will be a considerable section of the capitalist class hostile to the establishment of Socialism." This carries with it the implication

Correspondence and articles should be sent to FORUM, S.P.G.B., 52, Clapham High St., London, S.W. 4. Subscriptions 12 months, 7/6d, 6 months 3/9d. Cheques and P.O.'s should be made payable to: E. Lake, S.P.G.B.

EDITORIAL

It will be noticed that FORUM this month is printed on smaller pages. There are just as many words as in recent issues, however, so all it means is that you are buying less blank paper.

This step has resulted in a saving in printing costs—but there is still an urgent need to increase circulation. The money paid into Head Office for FORUMS has fallen a little short of the total printer's bills. The Executive Committee has ruled that FORUM shall not be subsidised from the General Fund, so it is up to readers to increase the sales if they want it to continue in its present form. Branches are urged to increase their orders, and to carry a small stock of back numbers against future demands, which Head Office may not be able to meet.

There has been a welcome increase in the amount of material submitted for publication. Several articles have had to be held over until February. The correspondence column seems to be "catching on," though we would specially ask writers not to be too reckless in entering the fray. The repetition of old arguments, heavy irony and selection of evidence are among the things to be avoided.

that a section will *not* be hostile. Therefore we can assume that some capitalists *will*, as McClatchie states, "be stirred to espouse the new system." And if they can understand, why not the others?

What is it that the capitalist class will so dearly wish to hang on to—palaces, mansions, cars, luxury yachts, stocks and shares, or just the *love* of exploitation for its own sake? Tell the capitalist now that he lives by exploitation and oppression, and he will laugh at you. Tell the worker that he is exploited and oppressed, and he will do the same. It is all very well for workers to say that capitalists find 'capitalist life' sweet, but in relation to Socialism it is what the capitalist thinks about it himself that counts. He and the worker may have different things to lose, but they both have the same to gain from Socialism.

I deny that "just how the armed force will be used is of secondary importance," and view with horror Lake's further statement that "it may be necessary to take more positive action, leading to serious consequences to some of the contestants . . ."

May I ask Lake who is going to be the authority to direct the infliction of "serious consequences" on the recalcitrant minority? And who are going to be the socialists who, having at last reached their objective, will be willing to risk death before they have seen it realised?

The dispute, as I see it, does not only turn upon the interpretation of Clause 6 of the D. of P., but also upon the Object. In fact, they link up. The dispute is because there is not agreement on what the "common ownership and democratic control . . . by and in the interests of the whole community" implies.

Besides the undemocratic method of "compelling a minority to accept the decision of the majority," we see a desire to carry over this undemocratic method into a propertyless system of society. This is reflected in the views held by some members that certain methods of production will obtain and that (self-appointed?) organisers will direct operations—which calls to mind a set of conditions almost in keeping with Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*.

The wording of Clause 6 may have sounded, and perhaps still does sound, stirring to 19th century emotions, but if we seriously examine the idea of things commonly

held, "state machinery," "armed forces," etc., can no longer have any meaning except that they are part of property-based society. They are not something that socialists can use to turn upon a recalcitrant minority. Such action could only change the bourgeois state into a "proletarian" state, which has nothing to do with Socialism.

McClatchie's statement that "some members of the ruling class will be stirred to espouse the new system" is extended by Lake to infer what McClatchie did not say—"a most remarkable landslide in favour of Socialism."

But even if we accept that there will be a landslide, how does it repudiate the class struggle? There are more antagonisms and harmful separations springing from property than just the eternal ding-dong of class struggle. Both classes within Capitalism suffer what Engels called "its narrow conditions." Because doctors, dockers, clerks, dustmen, etc., exist as groups of different status today, this doesn't mean they will exist as such in the future. This false projection into the socialist future of what exists today leads to the supposition of "qualified administrators" and Carnell's Socialist Home Secretaries.

As I see it, Socialism will really mean co-operation to the desired end of human happiness. People will co-operate without the necessary of being labelled with an occupational tag. Neither will they be forced to undertake tasks that bind them to certain methods of production. There will not be "time" in the sense that we understand it today, when "time is money."

People will take pleasure in the things that they do well—without compulsion or authority. This rules out the continual supposition of "queer people" who, it is suggested, will do all kinds of anti-social things. I have noticed that, when these hypotheses are put forward, it is always "the others" who will act in such and such a way.

Finally, McClatchie need not be too concerned about the suggestion of "pacifist views." What is wrong with pacifism, anyway, apart from the mistaken notions of the pacifists about capitalist society? And to Lake: how much more serious is a pacifist, non-violent interpretation of the D. of P. than a repressive, Dictatorship-of-the-Proletariat one?

G. HILBINGER.

CANVASSING IN PARK LANE

Reply to A.A.N.

Apart from the muddled thinking and contradictions contained in the article "Class Struggle and the S.P.G.B.," by A.A.N. (Dec. FORUM) there are ideas and implications in it which are dangerous. Not only in the sense that, were they adopted and put into practice by the Party, they would attract all kinds of non-socialist support, but some of these are in fact intrinsically anti-socialist conceptions. It is with these that this reply must mainly be concerned.

First of all, it is not correct that we "are trying to enlist the aid of the whole of mankind to change the basis of present society." Our job is to make clear to the workers the source of their insecurity, worry and exploited lives so that they themselves, of their own volition, as a result of their own clarified indignation and abhorrence of their enslaved condition, will organise to overthrow the present system. In any case, "enlist" is an ill-chosen word. True, we explain the desirability (but foremost, the possibility) of Socialism. But this is not the source from whence springs support for the Socialist idea. Therefore it is not to painting pictures of Socialism that the socialist propaganda must turn, but rather is it to the putting up of a mirror for the worker to see himself as he is *now*—a degraded, deprived being supporting a set of arrogant, useless and in most cases predatory rulers.

Taking, I think with justification, my own personal experience, which cannot be uncommon (to workers) I can recall vividly that my attraction to Socialism was based on an increasing sense of insecurity, fear and abhorrence of the society I lived in—namely, experience of the degradation of poverty and wage-slavery, the humiliation of the unemployment exchange, the abhorrence of being ground down to my work, and the knowledge of how this contrasted with the privileges and economic dominance of the rich capitalist class. A.A.N. would perhaps say that this was "sour grapes." Peculiarly enough, this is the very argument the defenders of Capitalism use against workers who kick against the pricks.

The immediate job is *not* "to convince people of the benefits of Socialism," but to convince them of the necessity of fighting capitalist society and all its supporters, and supporting ideas, the great preponderance of

which are subsidised and financed by the capitalist class. The immediate job is to convince them of the possibility of eliminating capitalist society. First and foremost, the worker is concerned with his present iniquities, and it is this and this alone which will give the working class, as individuals and as a class, the motivating impulse to overthrow the present society.

PROPERTY INTERESTS

What on earth does A.A.N. mean by the statement that "in its propaganda the party shall *not* (his emphasis) participate in the class struggle"? I can think of no more comforting thought to our rulers. The logic of this is that we must carefully avoid telling the worker anything that would make him aware of his enslaved economic position, otherwise, willy-nilly, we are inducing him to act so much the more forcefully in his own interest as a *worker*, as well as making him a socialist. As I see it, the only way I as a socialist propagandist could avoid participating in the class struggle would be to take a large dose of poison!

Of course, this is all ridiculous rot. We all know and agree that, in the very act of explaining and analysing Socialism, we are in effect combating the predatory tendencies of our rulers. Heaven only knows how many times I myself have used and heard this very argument in favour of giving priority to socialist propaganda as opposed to, say, the limitations of trade union activity. In the future, I shall have to drop that one (as well as a lot of others) otherwise I shall be in danger of participating in the class struggle!

A.A.N. further tells us that "it is patently clear that the true interests of anybody within Capitalism is to acquire property," and that we must not "disdain this first law of capitalist society." Is A.A.N. crackers or has he just dropped in on us from a flying saucer? Has he not heard or experienced that the first and foremost law for the worker is to acquire his week's wages or dole, as the case might be, and then to acquire the very ephemeral properties of enough food, etc., to tide him and his family over till the following week: Acquiring property, is it! Of course, this is the logic of A.A.N.'s arguments—to transform socialist into capitalist propaganda! By the way, if it is so patently clear that the true interests of anybody in Capitalism (as

argued before, this must mean the capitalist or the budding one) is to acquire property, how are we going to convince those acquirers of property, the capitalists with whom A.A.N. seems so much concerned, that their true interests are also at the same time to put an end to it?

Further on, "Socialism is in the interests of everyone." An excellent platitude! A platitude, as everyone knows, is something that everybody is more or less aware of. But are we to infer from this that we have so much cause and reason to appeal to members of the capitalist class as to the workers? If this is so, why not an intensive canvassing campaign in Park Lane and Mayfair? Why not put up a candidate in Westminster or in some bourgeois dormitory in the most expensive part of Surrey? What about selling the *Standard* (the Socialist one) outside the most exclusive night-clubs? And so on.

Before I am accused of flippancy, may I plead the utmost sincerity. Of course, we know well enough that we must primarily appeal to members of the working class, not simply because they are the people we happen to meet most often, but because it is only they who can provide the emotive will, power and desire to do away with capitalist society. In fact, must a socialist be told that the possibility of Socialism only arises at all as a result of Capitalism's creation of a world-wide working class. Otherwise there is no reason why Socialism should not have been created any time during the past.

Again, why is it that a newcomer to socialist propaganda sometimes confuses us with the C.P. (Would A.A.N. wish that he should confuse us with the Conservative Party?) Are we so divorced from our fellow-workers and the world we live in that C.P. and S.P. ideas cannot spring from the same sources? C.P. sympathies and ideas spring from the same despair and discontent as do ours.

Surely I need not enlighten A.A.N. that the C.P., as opposed to our concern for clarification, use these half-formed, anti-capitalist notions for their own ends. After all, A.A.N. admits they only apply to the newcomer. It seems hardly likely that we shall gain this newcomer's attention by a piece of sophistry such as telling him we are opposed to him as a worker but are with

him as a human being. He would be perfectly correct to reject being subjected to such a lethal division! It is surely obvious that the worker and the human being are emotionally and in every other way the same creature.

WORKING-CLASS AXE

A.A.N. is worried about our grinding a working-class axe. But, whatever our wishes in this matter, does not our propaganda involve contrasting the present enslaved status of the worker with that of his more-than-usually absent boss? And, in the very act of explaining this situation, we must needs identify ourselves with him as a worker. This applies equally well to almost any facet of socialist propaganda one cares to think about. And, mark you, even should a capitalist wish to do some propaganda work for us, he too must approach the subject from a working-

class standpoint. Viewed in this light, it can be seen how unreal and ridiculous is this conception of the socialist holding aloof. Even if he could do so, from a purely theoretical viewpoint, he would soon expose himself as a pedant and a hypocrite.

As to our propaganda being tainted, of course everything we say is tainted. Tainted with the vileness of the exploitation and degradation of wage-slavery. And it will continue to be so tainted till its source, the enslavement of the working class by its rulers, is put an end to.

If the S.P.G.B. is a hater of all classes—which is quite incorrect; we hate capitalist class society—then surely of the two we have infinitely more reason to hate the capitalist class most, which concerns itself very much with the perpetuation of the present system, as witness the incredibly huge sums spent in apologising and eulogising Capitalism. Every-

thing that is conceivably possible is done to obscure the murderous and anti-social nature of *their* system. It is no argument to say that the workers also defend this system, for we know from our historical approach that the enslaved class always follows the ideas of its masters and rulers, and no socialist in his proper senses would argue that the contrary was the truth.

Just one more word for the present. A.A.N. talks glibly about us “coming down on one particular side—the working class,” in a reproachful tone. This should not be so surprising at all, for may I point out to A.A.N. that, whilst I can provide no concrete figures, I’m prepared to stake my only decent pair of shoes that 99.999% of the membership of the party came down on the working-class side as soon as they put their heads out into the world!

JUDD.

WHALES, MINNOWS AND DEEP WATER

A Criticism of Jarvis' H.C. Lecture

A good case can be made out for the contention that capitalism is conducive to poor health—*under certain conditions, in certain places*. This is quite clear when it is appreciated that the state of health can be affected by one or a combination of any of the following factors: general geographical location, climate, immediate environment, economic conditions, mental and emotional reactions, food, work and exercise. The health of an individual varies from week to week, probably from day to day—good health being synonymous with a high degree of resistance to disease. If only Comrade Jarvis had left it at that!

It is far more difficult to maintain that capitalism necessarily lowers the health of the working class in general. In some special circumstances it may, e.g., specific industrial and occupational diseases—silicosis, anthrax, etc. The only general factors are probably worry and fatigue. With food, members of the working class have a measure of freedom of choice—with a little forethought it is possible to obtain a good, plain, varied diet. Most people eat too much anyway, although the human digestive system is quite capable of dealing with a fair amount of poor quality foodstuffs without any serious detrimental effect on the health. Again, most people's lives are far too sedentary, and what exercise is taken is often too sudden and too violent.

What is lacking in these cases is just a little common sense, not socialism. The latter, some party members seem to imagine, is a panacea for all evils, which in turn are laid at the door of capitalism.

Two questions for Comrade Jarvis. What is a chemical? What is a poison? To use the former term meaning a substance injurious to man is nonsense. Even one of those tomatoes grown on a special compost so beloved of “nature cure” addicts is a combination of chemicals. Poison is a relative term. Whether a substance is poisonous will depend on where, when and in what quantities it is introduced into the body. Given orally, hydrochloric acid, in sufficient concentration, is violently corrosive, and in sufficient quantity, lethal. Yet hydrochloric acid occurs naturally in the human digestive system. Which brings me to the question of the toxic materials manufactured by bacteria pathogenic to man. If every time a pathogenic bacterium gained entry into the human body it meant the contraction of a disease, clearly we should all find early graves. This does not happen, for in most cases the bacteria provide the necessary stimulus to the invaded tissues for antibodies to be produced—i.e., chemical substances capable of neutralising the toxins. Similarly, in many diseases, infection frequently means subsequent immunity for life.

On the other hand, some pathogens are incapable of providing the necessary stimulus to the defending tissues. They, in short, do not defend—there is no natural immunity. Syphilis is an example; contact invariably means infection. Human beings are not, and probably never will be, immune to all diseases.

On the basis of this chemical struggle for ascendancy in the human body, has developed the science of bacteriological remedies for and preventions of diseases. Where *natural* immunity is lacking or poor, a *passive* or *active* immunity can be acquired by various inoculation techniques of vaccines and anti-toxins. Brilliant results have been obtained in the prevention of tetanus and typhoid. *Active* immunity to a specific disease may be acquired by introducing dead bacteria into the blood-stream. The necessary antibodies are produced to counteract the toxic material, whilst the bacteria, being dead, cannot multiply and put an unnecessary strain on the bodily resistance. Or the bacteria can be filtered off and just the toxic fluid injected into the body. This is the case where active immunity is acquired against diphtheria.

The technique of providing *passive* immunity throws no demands on the defending tissues, for immunity is acquired by the introduction of anti-serum, i.e. material containing antibodies from some other animal that

has been actively immunised. This is obviously useful where the diseased person is so weak in resistance that the introduction of a toxin may be just sufficient to tip the scales in favour of the invading pathogen. The fall in the number of diphtheria cases since active immunisation became widespread may or may not be entirely due to this technique, but the fact that the mortality rate of those actually contracting the disease has been reduced from 80% to 5% is certainly the result of the use of diphtheria anti-serum in the early stages of infection. Comrade Jarvis need not have dealt with inoculation and vaccination for the purposes of his lecture, but nevertheless he takes the opportunity of making sweeping condemnatory remarks. We were not treated to any scientific criticism of the above-mentioned techniques, but were subjected to a tear-jerking story of poison being injected into our bodies from miserably maltreated and diseased horses; a story reminiscent of the poorer quality propaganda that emanates from anti-vaccination and anti-vivisection schools of thought.

Regarding cancer research, Jarvis suggested that workers in this field deliberately fail to find a cure, in order that money will continue to flow in their direction. This is a stupid slander. The wage labour relationship does not generally prevent problems from being solved in the laboratory, and medi-

cal research workers are no different in this respect. A valid criticism would have been that the State is more concerned with allocating money to war materials to the neglect of medical research.

The *laissez-faire* capitalism of the 19th century is hardly applicable to the present day. Yet this appears to be Jarvis' concept of factory conditions, standards of food production and distribution, etc. During the last 100 years State interference in individual capitalist concerns has seen the development of greatly improved factory conditions, an increasing control of food production and distribution, although, of course, conditions are far from perfect.

Regarding some of the various carriers of disease, Local Authorities have certainly been a force that has assisted in diminishing the effects of many of the immediate environmental factors. Water is an example worth going into in some detail. Pure water does not exist in nature, all water containing some organic or inorganic chemicals in solution, and containing some form of microscopic life. Surface water is never certain to be safe, even in out-of-the-way mountain regions. Even deep wells, particularly in chalk strata which is liable to extensive vertical cracking, are not safe from contamination. Local authorities provide safe drinking water from their purification plants, the final process in which is chlorination. Chlorine, being a

chemical and a poison, is therefore doubly damned by Jarvis, who would presumably prefer a clear bubbling mountain stream in the upper reaches of which a sheep had recently defaecated.

The Report on Occupational Mortality 1921 noted that the incidence of tuberculosis increased in descending the economic scale, yet in this country the death rate from this dangerous disease was in 1937 only one-fifth of what it was 70 years before then, and has continued to diminish since. Moreover, a parallel decline has occurred in other civilised countries.

Jarvis drew unfavourable comparisons between the health of people in England and Tristan de Cunha, Patagonia and amongst Eskimos and Zulus, although he failed to tell us what were the variable factors. Why draw our attention to the Zulus' good teeth? A Socialist Zulu, by the same line of argument, could hold up our way of living as an example to his fellow Zulus by pointing out that we are free from parasitic hookworm.

Let these few notes do for the moment, although much more could be said. Suffice it to say that Comrade Jarvis approached a complex problem in a facile manner. The role of a whale amongst minnows is popular on the public platform, but occasionally larger fish crop up in the audience.

R. BOTT.

IS PARLIAMENT AN INSTRUMENT OF EMANCIPATION?

(continued)

Before discussing the Party's and my own attitude towards "capturing Parliament," I should like to record William Morris' stand on the subject. Although I do not agree with all that he wrote on Socialism, I think that his ideas on Parliament are worth quoting. In a letter to Dr. Glasse of Edinburgh (May 23, 1887) Morris wrote:—

"My position, and the dealings of Socialists with it, I will now try to state clearly. I believe that the Socialists will certainly send members to Parliament when they are strong enough to do so: in itself I see no harm in that, so long as it is understood that they go as rebels, and not as members of the governing body prepared by passing palliative measures to keep "society" alive. But I fear that many of them will be drawn into that error by the corrupting influence of a body professedly hostile to Socialism: and

therefore I dread the parliamentary period (clearly a long way ahead of the present) of the progress of the party; and I think it will be necessary always to keep alive a body of Socialists of principle who will refuse responsibility for the action of the parliamentary portion of the party. Such a body now exists in the shape of the (Socialist) League, while germs of the parliamentary side exist in the S.D.F. (taken over by the S.P.G.B.) . . ."

In a later letter to Glasse (Sept. 23, 1887) Morris wrote:

"For myself, as I have told you before, I have no wish to attack any body of Socialists: all I can say is that I would prefer to belong to a body that held aloof from parliamentary work, if such a body existed; and I think it very desirable, to say the least of it, that such a body should

exist."

Although Morris thought that socialists would at some time ("clearly a long way ahead") be sent into Parliament, he considered that they should go only as rebels; that they should never attempt to "capture Parliament in order to abolish it"! He thought it desirable that a Socialist Party should, at some further date, come into existence which would stand aloof from Parliament.

Although he held these opinions, he did not wish to attack those who thought differently from himself, or to split the movement. When some of our pro- and anti-parliamentarians in the S.P.G.B. get rather heated (and at times abusive) they should remember William Morris.

THE S.P. AND PARLIAMENT

The title of this article is: "Is Parlia-

ment an Instrument of Emancipation?" That is: Is it necessary to capture Parliament (by electing 500 to 650 M.P.'s) in order to conquer political power and the state machine? Is it necessary for representatives of the Socialist Party (and, of course, the electorate) to go to Parliament in order to establish Socialism? The Party, through the medium of its literature, says: Yes. Number 6 of the Declaration of Principles states that "as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery *including these forces*, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic."

That the machinery of government exists to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class no socialist would deny. But how this machinery of government, with its armed forces, police and the like, can be "converted into the agent of emancipation" I do not know. And no Party member has ever told me! If the majority of members in the Party agree that most of this so-called principle is incorrect, or just archaic in language, then it must be scrapped or re-written.

But the phrase in No. 6 that I am chiefly concerned with is "conquest of the powers of government." Does this mean conquering, controlling or abolishing the state and governmental machine? Or does it mean capturing governmental power via "socialist delegates"? A perusal of S.P.G.B. literature seems to suggest the latter. In "Principles and Policy" we find the following:

"The machinery of government is controlled through Parliament. Parliament provides the money without which no navy or air force can be equipped or maintained. Parliament, which pays the piper, calls the tune to which Jack Tar and Tommy Atkins must dance. The moral is plain: the working class must organise for the capture of Parliament.

"When they have possession of this instrument they will have control of the armed forces, and will be in a position to proceed to the abolition of private property in the means of living and the organisation of industry on the basis of common ownership of the machinery of production." (pp. 25-6.)

And, in "Questions of the Day" Ch. V. "Parliament":

"The attitude of the S.P.G.B. on the

need to gain control of the political machinery has been logical and consistent. We hold the same view as Marx as to the necessity of the workers gaining control of the machinery of government before they can establish Socialism. We also hold Marx's view that in advanced capitalist countries the vote will give that control." (p. 30, New Edition.)

This, then, is the party attitude on Parliament. It must be captured, by sending "socialist delegates" to what one pamphlet calls "the seat of power," before the state machine can be taken over and means of living made the property of all mankind.

The question we must answer is: Why must we capture Parliament? Why bother about Parliament at all? The answer from the official Party point of view is: because we need Parliament, so that we can then control the state machine, with the armed forces, police, etc., in case there is a counter-revolution—an attempt, presumably by the expropriated bourgeoisie, to throw a spanner into the socialist works. The Party concept of revolution is still that of Marx and Engels in their early days; that all revolutions must be followed (or probably will be followed) by counter-revolution, as were all previous revolutions.

Those who hold the view that we must capture Parliament in order to use its coercive forces against a recalcitrant minority hold the view (probably subconsciously) that we will never get the overwhelming majority of the people to understand, desire and establish Socialism. They are the neo-Leninists, and are not far removed from the "qualified-violence-reservationists" mentioned by Comrade Parker in the September FORUM.

SHOULD A SOCIALIST PARTY USE PARLIAMENT?

My viewpoint is that there is no need to capture Parliament in order to establish Socialism. I hold the view that the contesting of elections and by-elections may be of some propaganda value, but that this will lessen as we become better known. In the (dim distant?) future, socialists may enter Parliament—although I am opposed to it—but if they do then they would go only as rebels, only to use the floor of the House as another (and very minor) means of propaganda.

I am not suggesting that socialists should not use the ballot as a means of counting numbers. At the moment, the writing of the word "Socialism" across the ballot paper is practically futile. But in the future, when we are much stronger, when perhaps there are millions of socialists here and abroad, then it will, in the words of Engels, prove

to be a means of gauging the maturity of the working class, of "counting heads"—and the ideas inside them. When millions write "Socialism, S.P.B.G." or "Socialism, S.P.N.Z." across their ballot papers, the thermometer of universal suffrage will show boiling point!

When the vast majority of mankind register their desire for Socialism, they will take over the means of production, begin straight away to produce things solely for use, and take over the state machine. Those organs of the state which were necessary to Capitalism, such as much of the civil service, the armed forces and the police, will be disbanded. (No doubt numerous policemen would be absorbed in such organisations as those dealing with public services, e.g. control of traffic. No doubt, also, some form of Labour Exchange would be necessary for a time for the use of those people wishing to find useful work to do . . . and so on.) The state would "wither away," its various organs becoming defunct or atrophied. None of this would need an act of Parliament.

A last word on counter-revolution. As Parker pointed out, this would be impossible and unthinkable. Since the vast majority of the people would be socialists and would refuse to support Capitalism any longer, so would the vast majority of the workers who comprised the state machine. Most of the army conscripts would be socialists, most of the civil servants, most of the police, etc. Immediately after the majority had registered their desire for Socialism, the majority in government service would begin to dismantle the state apparatus. And no one would, or could, stop them. When the majority of mankind decide that they will no longer work for wages, or be exploited in any form, they will not need to capture Parliament. The new society will have been born.

PETER E. NEWELL.

TAKING THE RISE

"I am told that if I get a rise the goods I make will not sell because Germany will make them more cheaply, and I shall be worse off.

"So, if I want to keep my standard of living up I have got to keep it down. If I work for less than my German counterpart I shall be better off. Then he will want to work for even less, so that he can be better off than I am.

"Finally, I suppose we shall all be working for Sweet Fanny Adams, and living like adjectival lords."

—Letter in *Daily Mirror* (23.12.53.)